



EUGENE
**Parks and
Open Space**

Brewer Park

**WORKSHOP #1
MEETING REPORT
May 26th, 2005**

Workshop time: 6:30 to 8:00pm

Workshop location: Sheldon Community Center, 2445 Willakenzie, Eugene

Workshop facilitator: Robin Hostick

Other City staff present: Emily Proudfoot

BACKGROUND

City of Eugene Parks Planning staff hosted the first of two or three neighborhood workshops to discuss upcoming improvements to Brewer Park. The 1.9-acre park site was purchased in 1973, and in 1981 was improved with basic amenities, including concrete pathways, trees, lawn, benches, and a children's playground. Current improvements to the park are funded by the 1998 Parks and Open Space bond measure. The workshop included a presentation on the project, the process, and the context of the park. This was followed by a general, informal discussion of issues and ideas relating to park improvements. Goals for the evening included 1) providing information to the neighborhood, and; 2) gathering ideas for a new park development plan. About 18 neighbors attended the workshop.

ADVERTISEMENT

Advertisement for workshop #1 included the following:

- A postcard invitation was mailed on May 13th to about 825 Cal Young Neighborhood residents within approximately 1/2 mile of the park
- Personal postcard invitations were mailed to other interested parties and stakeholders, including neighborhood leaders
- An article on the event was included in the May 19 issue of the Council Newsletter
- A news release was distributed on May 25
- The workshop was included on the Parks and Open Space online schedule of events
- The workshop was announced in the City/Region section of the Register Guard preceding the event

PRESENTATION

Meeting participants convened at the Sheldon Community Center green room. A slide presentation was delivered, covering an overview of park projects in the Cal Young neighborhood, funding sources, process and time line for Brewer improvements, case studies of other neighborhood parks recently built in Eugene, and an analysis of the Brewer park site.

Basic elements of a neighborhood park were outlined, including overall policies around development level of various park types (what's in, what's optional, what's out), to help frame the discussion.

The planning process was outlined briefly. It was explained that comments and ideas generated at this first workshop would guide the design process. A draft concept plan based on these ideas will be presented at the second workshop, and, if necessary, will be refined and presented again at a third public workshop. No design work took place prior to the first workshop. The current schedule was given for anticipated park construction in the summer and fall of 2006.

The existing park site was reviewed in detail, including a description of major elements such as relationships to the neighborhood and existing park amenities. In general, it was explained that the site is predominantly flat, with scattered trees, limited open space, back-fence configuration for most of the park (except frontage on Brewer Ave), etc. The condition of the playground was described as sub-standard to the current playground design and safety standards. The overall condition of other park amenities was also described.

It was explained that the budget for the project, approximately \$75,000 available for construction, is relatively small and will need to be strictly prioritized. The Oakmont Park budget was stated to be \$505,000 in response to a question for comparison. However, participants were urged to discuss ideas and desires for the park regardless of current budget limitations to make sure the concept plan reflects a long-term vision.

DISCUSSION

An informal and productive discussion was held around issues and ideas for the park. All participants had an opportunity to share ideas and comments. Participants were asked to list issues, concerns, ideas, preferences, etc. for improvements to the park. A list is provided following this summary for a more detailed report of participant comments.

There was much discussion of semi tractor-trailer parking along the street, which was reported to be an ongoing problem for a number of years. The tractor-trailer rig blocks visibility into the playground, blocks parking access for park users, and creates a visual hazard for people crossing the street in front of, or behind, the parked vehicle. It was suggested that physical barriers such as parking bump-outs would help reduce the chance of trucks parking on park street frontage. In addition, the park frontage could be signed for 2-hour or "no overnight" parking. No decision was made as to which would be preferable, and staff agreed to discuss the matter with parking control staff and report back on the most desirable option. It was explained that the City doesn't have the resources to patrol and regularly enforce these parking restrictions, but it does allow a means of creating a regulation that can be enforced if a problem or consistent violation occurs.

The participant group was clearly unified behind replacement of the playground as a high priority. Staff shared information from Parks maintenance staff regarding shortcomings of the playground, without getting into great detail about numerous, specific issues based on playground safety

inspection guidelines. It was discussed whether or not the swing set could be re-used, however it has become apparent (based on staff discussion following the workshop) that the design of the swing is out of compliance with safety standards and cannot be used. General configuration of the playground was discussed, in particular the need to expand the footprint of the playground to the south, southwest, and west (in whatever proportions are necessary to accommodate basic use). Regarding expectations, staff described the likely future playground as a medium sized structure (2/3 Oakmont size) with swings, and several smaller elements such as spring riders, possibly a Supernova (the donut-shaped whirl element at Oakmont).

A discussion was held on the merits of various types of playground safety surface, including sand, engineered wood fiber, sawdust (current), gravel, etc., including the City's preference for use of engineered wood fiber primarily to allow disabled access to playground facilities, and secondarily to reduce maintenance needs. Sand play areas can be included, budget allowing, as auxiliary features to a main, wood-fiber-based play facility. Participants expressed a desire for a play facility geared towards younger children and similar to Oakmont in terms of providing specialized equipment and spatial separation.

Generally, participants supported including new park lights as part of future improvements. Concern about possible negative use could be mitigated by lights, according to principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). It was explained that lights cost around \$3000 each, and that about 5 lights would be needed in the park. The darkness of the park, and the depth of the park lot (with back fences facing and some trees/darker areas, creates an inhospitable feeling to neighbors wishing to walk through the park after dark.

Some neighbors reported negative use behind some taller shrubbery in the southern portion of the park at some point in the past, but that subsequent removal of the shrubs eliminated the problem. Another report was given regarding youth climbing trees late at night, and other disturbances. One neighbor living adjacent to the park reported a pattern of consistent, long-term vandalism, theft, burglary, trespass, and general mischief conducted on the participant's property over a period of years, and indicated that local youth were the primary perpetrators. It was indicated that the participant's fence was repeatedly destroyed, and the owner made an inquiry to the City about getting a fence built but never received a response. Staff offered to look into the issue, and although it was explained that the City, as a matter of policy, can't build and/or maintain fences for adjacent neighbors, it was possible to trim, reduce, or eliminate vegetation or other possible design contributions to making the park less attractive to negative use. The City can only make improvements on City-owned property, and it would need to be determined which side of the property line certain overgrown shrubs are located.

Some neighbors indicated that they felt the low-income housing in the neighborhood was the source of some negative behaviors, or that this was a common belief among neighbors. This may support the idea of a local-neighborhood-based effort to reconcile this perception, or to at least foster a sense of inclusion or ownership in the neighborhood which could help mitigate these social concerns.

Participants unanimously supported adding more benches and picnic tables. A picnic shelter structure was unanimously rejected. One participant suggested a soft-surface walking trail,

however staff indicated this would be of minimal recreational value due to the small size of the park. Desire was expressed for some sort of **hill or earth sculpture**, perhaps as a means of reducing car access (and damage) to the park, which was indicated as an occasional issue. However it was pointed out that this may block visibility from the street, which is important for maintaining positive use in the park.

Some participants expressed support for a **short basketball hoop** (6 or 7 feet) for very small children, perhaps as an addition or bump-out to the existing basketball court. A desire was voiced for dog-friendly amenities, in particular a dog waste bag dispenser. Several other amenities and improvements were supported, including flowers, low shrubs, native shrubs (all low-growing), a bench nook in the south end of the park adjacent to the path, a designated picnic area with tables suitable for small groups, a water feature or fountain, places to ride bikes on pathways, and **preservation of significant open areas in the park**. Participants expressed a strong desire to **include art in the park**, whereby staff presented several other park projects that have incorporated art (above and beyond the 1% for art requirement, which was addressed with a larger series of art projects funded by the 1998 POS bond).

Some of these desires and amenities stem from a **recent brainstorming meeting hosted by neighbors at the park**, with about 10 adults and kids in attendance. Workshop participants presented the results of the meeting, including drawings and flip chart notes, which are included in this report.

Concern was expressed by a participant about the poor condition of the lawn in some of the “patchwork” squares near the playground, and for the lawn in general. A preference was expressed for removing the lumpy, irregular lawn areas (trash traps) for some other surface (concrete) or ground cover, or shrubs.

The following is a general list of comments and ideas presented by participants during the workshop.

ISSUES

General

- Wet around whirl (moat) otherwise not much water around
- Preserve big/open space in park
- Keep balance of active and passive uses for park (i.e. keep active uses concentrated)

Safety and Negative Use

- Cars doing cookies on lawns – can we block park from street to prevent access?
- Visibility to back of park important – keep open to limit negative use
- Some syringes found behind shrubs at back of park (shrubs and problem gone now)
- Park is dark and scary for some at night
- Remove shrubs at LTD bus stop for safety and visibility
- Kids climb trees at south end of park – cause mischief
- Significant negative use experienced by neighbor (vandalism, bombs, broken windows, fires and matches, burglary, no leads by police, going on for 10 years)

Traffic and Parking

- Concern about truck parking on street
- Busses (ltd/school) commonly use street
- Street used for cut-through traffic
- Add crossing? Paint or otherwise
- Mark street for 2-hr or "no overnight" parking
- Truck driver non-responsive to requests to stop parking by park
- Where are trucks displaced? Problem goes elsewhere.
- Where is parking for 6 new homes? Limiting street limits their parking options

IDEAS

Facilities/Design

- Sandbox
- Lights
- Keep the merry go round
- Keep the basketball court (frequently used by older kids)
- Add painted lines to basketball court
- Add picnic tables and benches (bench in back of park facing open space)
- "Bench nook"
- Need separate toddler area
- Native plant bed at north end to block cars from accessing park and to create a buffer between the street and the play area
- Add a hill at the north end of the park (or elsewhere) or other landforms
- Lights generally approved, although playground equipment is a higher priority
- May need more trash cans?
- Add a place for neighborhood barbecues – need tables, shade
- Consider a structure for middle school kids to hang out on
- Soft surface pathway next to paved path
- Add "value statement" or "vision statement" sign for neighborhood
- Add art!
- Not enough swings! Keep existing swing set to save \$\$?

Notes from Neighbor-Initiated Meeting in Park

Facilities/Design

- Big circle or square climbing structure
- Flowers
- More swings
- Teeter totter, bouncy horses, shiny slide, tube slide, tire swings, tunnel, wiggly bridge
- Water fountain or water feature to play in
- Basketball hoops for big kids and little kids
- More lighting, more seating, benches, etc.
- Tilted merry-go-round (like Oakmont) [Kompan Supernova]
- New play surface (not sawdust) w/bigger chunks
- Keep some open green areas
- Bike path through and around park so kids can ride on fun pathways

FINDINGS

The level of response and viewpoints offered at the workshop suggest a reasonable representation of the neighborhood's values and needs. The participant group appeared to be remarkably cohesive in their vision and priorities for the park. Based on feedback thus far it is clear that there is agreement in favor of redevelopment of the playground as a reasonable priority to anchor the improvement project, with a desire to add a range of other basic amenities, modifications for improved use, and to address safety and potential social issues. Design options should emphasize preserving and enhancing the current qualities of the park, providing a gathering space, and improving the sense of community through park design and function.

CLOSING

Participants were reminded that there will be at least one more public meeting for Brewer Park in about 6 weeks, and were encouraged to watch the City/Region section of the newspaper as well as their mailbox for invitations to this event. It was explained that, at the next workshop, participants will be able to respond to a park design that will be created based upon discussions and priorities from today's event. Participants or other interested parties are welcome to discuss the project or submit comments at any time via phone, email or delivered mail.

ATTENDEES:

The following parties attended the workshop:

William E. Sargent
Lori Gannon
Barbara L. Gunn
Eric & Keb Wold
Brinda Narayan Wold
Terri White
Betty Flinn
Donna Brant
Jenica Cogdill
Douglas Schroeder
Robin Holt
Shawn & Rick Oakes
Rebecca Mannheimer
Tracy Berry & Lloyd Paseman
David Downing

COMMENTS SHEETS

The following comments were recorded on comment sheets provided at the workshop and turned in to City staff at the end of the event.

Total comment sheets handed in at meeting: 4

1. *In what ways do you think Brewer Park can benefit you, your neighborhood, or your community?*
 - Being a nicer, friendlier place for kids to go and play
 - Hoping that improvements will eliminate problem elements
2. *What do you feel are some of the most important issues facing the park?*
 - Safety, lighting
 - Truck in front of the park; people drive too fast on Brewer
 - Lack of lighting
3. *What existing features or aspects of the park site do you like most, or feel should be preserved?*
 - Adequate open uninterrupted space is needed for those of us who utilize the park, but do not have children
 - Merry go round, swing set & basketball court
 - Basketball court, merry go round
4. *What do you think needs to be improved or changed most?*
 - Signage about discovery!
 - Lighting – space
 - Traffic
 - Take out sawdust
5. *What are some of the activities and/or facilities you would like to see happen in the park?*
 - Picnic area
 - Sand box, teeter totter, a tower-like structure
6. *What other considerations are important for the success of this park?*
 - Traffic
7. *Any other comments?*
 - I want to help build the park